

September 5, 2002

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Dianne Chinnes, Chairman, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Existing Program Review Follow-up Report:
Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology at Francis Marion University
FY 2000-01**

At its July 12, 2001, meeting, the Commission approved an external consultants' report on engineering and engineering technology programs at public universities in South Carolina. The report was written under the auspices of the Commission's review process of existing academic programs at senior institutions. Among the recommendations made by the CHE external consultant team and approved by the Commission was the assignment of provisional approval status to the program leading to the Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology at Francis Marion University. In keeping with Commission policy on programs that receive provisional approvals via the existing program review process, the Commission also requested that Francis Marion provide a follow-up report to the staff no later than July 1, 2002. The University submitted such a report in compliance with the deadline.

In its report, the consultant team identified a number of weaknesses in the B.S. in Engineering Technology program at Francis Marion that they felt warranted provisional approval status: 1) FMU needed to establish a clear vision and mission for the program; 2) the program needed an advisory board comprised of members from business and industry; 3) productivity levels in degrees awarded and student enrollment fell below established Commission benchmarks; 4) the program was basically limited to students who transferred from Florence-Darlington Technical College through an articulation agreement; FMU needed to develop a means by which other technical college students could enroll in the

program; 5) students complained that they received little or no help relative to career placement; and, 6) students complained that there was no student organization affiliated with the program (e.g., possible student-level professional organizations related to engineering technology).

Francis Marion's follow-up report to the Commission, submitted on June 24, 2002, confirms that the University has made significant strides over the past year in addressing most of the weaknesses detailed in the consultant team report. The following summaries serve as an overview of the information provided by FMU regarding the consultant team's main concerns:

Program Vision

Francis Marion has established a concrete set of goals and objectives for the B.S. in Engineering Technology that places the program within the context of the overall mission statements of the University and the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

Industrial Advisory Committee

The University has established an advisory committee for the program, the members of which were chosen from a wide range of engineering companies. Two of the members of the committee are alumni of the program. The committee has met to discuss the academic requirements of the program.

Degree Productivity and Enrollment

Francis Marion has received an increased number of applications to the B.S. in Engineering Technology degree program, and has accepted over 40 new students into the program since August 2001. During the 2001-02 academic year, the University graduated five students from the degree program, the minimum annual benchmark for the Commission's degree productivity standard.

Articulation with Technical Colleges

Francis Marion has agreed to accept appropriate engineering technology coursework from all technical colleges in the South Carolina Technical College System as transfer credit into the B.S. in Engineering Technology program. Additionally, the University has worked to publicize this policy change throughout the state.

Placement Services

The University has worked to enhance communication between the program director for the B.S. in Engineering Technology program and the Office of Career Development at the University as a means of enhancing the overall placement of graduates from the program and for developing internship and co-op experience for students. Also, the University will hold an annual Engineering Technology

Day, which will include visits from industry representatives and formal presentations on placement from the Office of Career Development.

Student Organizations

The University will establish a student chapter of the American Society of Certified Engineering Technicians (ASCET) in Fall 2002. The chapter will serve as a forum for students and faculty to discuss their experiences in the program as well as learn more about the field of engineering technology as a whole.

In light of the initiatives that Francis Marion has taken to enhance the quality and productivity of the degree program leading to the Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology, as presented in the University's follow-up report to the Commission, the staff believes that the program should be removed from provision status and awarded full approval status.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission the removal of provisional approval status for the degree program leading to the Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology at Francis Marion University and the simultaneous awarding of full approval status to the program. The Committee will consider this item at its meeting on September 4 and will make its recommendation to the Commission on September 5.